



The Word of God: How we received our Bible



The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. ~ Isaiah 40:8

INTRODUCTION:

Certainly, the debate over the Bible could be called, "The Great Debate"! Throughout the centuries following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Bible was so precious and possessing any portion of one so dangerous that there was no reason for the controversy that has arisen in the last few hundred years. Sadly enough in this time of plenty, the truth and trustworthiness of the Bible has been under attack, and the faith of countless lives has been shipwrecked! It is imperative that we stand firm in the conviction that we possess the complete and inspired Word of God!

During the ministry of Jesus Christ, he was questioned regarding the Law. Mat. 22:36 *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* No doubt, this lawyer was hoping that Jesus would contradict Himself or desecrate the Law in answering such a question. However, Jesus' answer was quick and profound. Mat. 22:37-38 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. From this command the rest of the Law flows and disregarding it renders every other part worthless!*

Let us then, in a similar manner, consider what is the greatest doctrine of Christianity. Salvation, Trinity, Virgin Birth, Eternal Security...there are truly many great doctrines. But, only think of where we learn of each and every one—the Bible! Is it not then safe to state that the most important doctrine is that of the Scriptures? If the Bible itself is undermined, what then must naturally happen with all of the wonderful truths it contains? Throughout our modern world, the belief that the Bible is perfect and without error is going extinct. Naturally then, the Bible is viewed as without authority and its truths as questionable. Have you ever heard a preacher say, "This should be translated this way." or, "This word actually means this." or, "There is a better translation."?

With this study, we will endeavor to show that the Word of God is as trustworthy now as when each book was originally given by God.

REVELATION:

Throughout the pages of the Bible God is revealing Himself to mankind and His wonderful plan of redemption. There are two types of revelation...

1. _____, Ps. 8:1-3; 19:1-6; 104:24; Acts 14:17—the knowledge any person may learn from observing creation. This includes the conscience that God created in us, Rom. 1:18-20; 2:14-15.
2. _____, Ps. 19:7-11; Rom. 1:15-17—the knowledge that may only be learned by God's supernatural efforts. God has incorporated various methods for accomplishing this, Heb. 1:1-2, but it is the Bible that records His special revelation.
 - a. The concept of _____ special revelation is believed by many today. If this be true then the Bible loses all of its authority to the persons claiming new revelation.
 - b. Consider the following verses: Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; 1 Cor. 13:9-10; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19.

INSPIRATION:

The method God used to supernaturally reveal Himself is inspiration. Although there are many places in the Bible that confirm this truth, we will especially examine two places...

1. 2 Tim. 3:16 – this is the only time we find “inspiration” in the Bible.
 - a. Theopneustos (θεοπνευστος) – literally meaning “ _____ ”, Acts 9:1.
 - b. The _____ of God gives life, Gen. 2:7; Ps. 33:6; Job 33:4.
 - c. The Bible is not the result of gifted individuals, it is God's Word!
2. 1 Peter 1:16-21 – now we see the _____ of inspiration.
 - a. Moved by the Holy Ghost, Acts 27:17.
 - b. God's Words in _____ languages! That is the majesty of the Bible and God's wisdom in using human instruments to give His divine Words, 2 Sam. 23:2; Jer. 1:9; Mat. 1:22; Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16; 4:24-25; 28:25.
 - c. How fitting that Jesus is called the Word of God, Luke 1:30-35.
3. Taking what we have learned thus far, every part of the Bible is precious, Mat. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16!
 - a. _____ – the very words and not thought's or concepts are inspired, Isa. 55:8-11.
 - b. _____ – every part of the Bible is inspired, Pro. 30:5; Mat. 4:4. The Bible doesn't merely contain the Word of God, it **is** the Word of God!
 - c. _____ – without error, Ps. 12:6; 19:7; 119:140. God inspired exactly what He wanted, and we can most certainly depend upon Him and His Word, 2 Tim. 3:15-16!
 - d. _____ – absolutely true and cannot be broken, Ps. 119:160; John 10:35; 17:17. This is verified by the many prophecies that have been fulfilled.



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PRESERVATION:

Thus far in our study we have learned that the Bible is the Word of God. God's special way of revealing Himself to mankind. The Bible is precious, far above precious metals and jewels! Think of the historical importance of the Bible; the scientific importance; the geographical significance; the philosophical relevance; the spiritual importance, etc.

Perhaps the most important thing for us to consider, living so long after the Bible was given by inspiration, is whether or not we still have God's word today. Did God supernaturally inspire His Word and then leave it to fate and chance as to whether or not the Bible would survive? Did the Bible only apply to the people that received it in the first place? Did God inspire His Word and then leave it up to unbelieving scholars to determine what is actually inspired at any given point in history?

The answer to the question of whether or not God preserved His Word is extremely important with very serious implications. If God has preserved His Word, then it retains the authority of being God's Word. If the Bible has not been preserved, then it has no real authority.

1. Importance of the Word of God, Ps. 138:2; 1 Cor. 1:17-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2
2. Biblical _____ of preservation, Ps. 12:6-7
 - a. Old Testament, Deut. 7:9; 1 Chron. 16:15-17 (Ps. 105:7-10); Ps. 19:7-11; 111:2-10; 119:9, 89, 152, 160; Ecc. 3:14; Isa. 40:8; 51:6-8; 55:10-11; Mat. 5:18; Luke 16:16-17; John 10:35
 - b. New Testament, Mat. 24:35; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:33; 1 Peter 1:23-25
3. Evidences of preservation...
 - a. Just think about the book you're likely holding in your hand! The earliest parts of the Bible were written some 3,500 years ago, while the latter parts were finished some 1,500 years later, and some 1,900 years have passed since that time! Throughout history and before the Bible was complete, there were attempts made to destroy it (see Jer. 36; later Antiochus Epiphanes ordered the destruction of the O.T.). After the completion of the N.T., the attempts to destroy the completed Bible grew more fierce. Consider that the Bible was continually attacked and threatened with annihilation throughout history, yet, most often, there were no kingdoms, armies, or any persons of worldly importance protecting it!
 - b. _____ evidence – there exist today over 2,800 O.T. And 5,600 N.T. Ancient manuscripts! We will examine this more in-depth later on.
 - c. Translations – there are many today who only consider the “_____” as the Word of God, yet, the Bible has NEVER consisted of only original documents! Consider also Acts 21:37-22:2.

Can God preserve His Word! Has He promised! Keep your eyes upon Him!



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OLD TESTAMENT:

It is commonly believed and taught that the O.T. has been altered long ago by scribes. We are told that there were no vowel points and that these points were added hundreds of years after the time of Christ. Also that the name of God most used in the O.T.—6,531 times—was changed from an “unpronounceable” word by having the vowel points of another word added to it! This is silly, illogical, and historically false! See Nehemiah 8:8—it is documented that the inspired author, Ezra, compiled and completed the O.T. Scriptures. I believe that God inspired every part of Scripture.

1. God's method for preserving O.T. Scripture, Deut. 31:9-12, 24-26; Rom. 3:1-2.
 - a. Every king in Israel was to make a _____ that was to be read _____, Deut. 17:18-20.
 - b. Isn't it interesting that the Word of God was committed to the priests for the safekeeping of the original text, and that kings were to have a personal copy to faithfully read?
 1. Consider Revelation 1:4-6; 5:9-10—the believing church is comprised of _____ and _____!
 2. Now consider Revelation 3:7-11—τηροῦσθε/terēpsete is also translated “_____”, “_____”, and “_____”, Jude 1:3.
 - a. Notice the warning to the church at Thyatira, Rev. 2:22, and the counsel to the church at Laodicea, Rev. 3:18!
 - b. Historically many leaders of the Catholic church have tried to have the true Word of God destroyed, and the modern churches of today accept corrupt translations in place of the Word of God.
2. The Hebrew text from which we have the King James Translation is known as the Masoretic text. The Masoretes were a family of Jewish scholars that took up the task of copying O.T. Scriptures during the sixth century A.D. from the groups of copyists that had gone on before them. The scribes used a number of rules to ensure that the text was correctly copied. The Masoretes added even more rules to protect the text. In 1517 A.D. the First Great Rabbinical Bible was printed, and in 1524/25 A.D. the Second Great Rabbinical Bible was printed. From these masterpieces we have our O.T. Scriptures in English.
3. The modern Bible translations use other texts in addition to the Masoretic text. These include the Dead Sea scrolls, Samaritan Pentateuch, Aramaic Targum, Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. There's no doubt that there are corrupt texts, but I'll stick to the text that has been received and held by the people God chose to be the guardians of the O.T.



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NEW TESTAMENT:

God chose an altogether different method for preserving the N.T. than what we saw last week regarding the O.T. We can see this right from the Bible, 1 Cor. 1:18-20, 25-29. In studying history, it is abundantly clear that this is precisely how God chose to preserve His Word. Simple believers who believed the N.T. to be precious and would not seek to add or take away from it, 1 Peter 2:9. The Holy Spirit guided these believers to reject uninspired books and to accept and use His true Word, John 16:12-13.

It is also abundantly clear from history that the devil sought very early to corrupt the N.T. Having failed with the living Word, he focused his efforts on destroying the written Word. This is extremely important to understand as we combat the unbelieving scholars who try to convince us that these earlier manuscripts are God's Word!

We have already seen the many promises God gave for preserving His Word, but we'll start our lesson off with John 12:46-48.

1. Three families of manuscripts?

- a. The _____ (Majority) Text—85 to 95% of the 5,255 Greek manuscripts that exist today are a part of this family. It is from this vast majority that we have the King James version.
- b. The _____ Text—these manuscripts originated in Egypt and are characterized by taking away from the Word of God. It is from these few manuscripts that the Revised Version and almost every new age Bible version have been translated.
- c. The _____ Text—these manuscripts originated in Rome and are characterized by adding to the Word of God. From this enlarged text the Catholic family of Bibles were translated (Old Latin, Latin Vulgate, and Douay Version).
- d. The fact of the matter is that there is only one text—_____ Text. The remaining texts disagree so much within themselves that they cannot be called families in themselves. They are simply the terribly corrupt relatives of the Received Text that embarrass everyone at family get togethers.

2. The Received Text is modern, not ancient?

- a. This is perhaps the strongest evidence that the Received Text is in fact the true Word of God. The early copies could not survive due to frequent use. Whereas the corrupt texts were left on shelves and so forth, not being accepted by believers in general. Thus, they were not taken up by believers, copied, and spread throughout the world.
- b. There is, however, evidence that the Received Text is most ancient. In existence today, there are a number of ancient translations...
 1. A.D. 150 the _____ Peshitta was translated from the Received Text.
 2. A.D. 157 the _____ Version was translated from the Received Text
 3. A.D. 350 the _____ Bible was translated from the Received Text.



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THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH:

In our last lesson we considered the method God used to preserve the N.T. Scriptures in the midst of terrible persecution and in spite of individuals trying to change them. We considered the strong evidence found in the majority of existing ancient manuscripts, as well as, the ancient translations showing the antiquity of the Received Text.

God used believers to verify and preserve His Word through the centuries following the time of Christ. Now we will consider the scholars He employed to give us the greatest, most used translation of all time – the King James Version.

FOUR GREAT EVENTS

1. Wycliffe's translation – between 1380 and 1384
 - a. Called the Morning Star of the Reformation, John Wycliffe was used mightily of God in opposing the Pope and the gross errors of the Catholic church.
 - b. Wycliffe used pamphlets and tracts to attack the Pope (whom he called anti-Christ) and the errors of the church. Perhaps his most important stance was the supreme authority of _____.
 - c. His greatest contribution was his translation of the Latin Vulgate into _____.
2. The printing press – 1452
3. Erasmus's Greek N.T. – 1516
 - a. It has been said that if Erasmus hadn't picked the lock, Luther would have never opened the door of the Reformation. Desiderius Erasmus was perhaps the greatest textual scholar of the Reformation.
 - b. Erasmus was critical of the Latin Vulgate, as well as, the Vaticanus – thus both the Western and Alexandrian texts were known to be _____. In his lifetime, he sent five editions of the traditional Greek N.T. to print. Robert Stevens produced four more editions, and Theodore Beza published ten more.
4. The Reformation – 1517
 - a. Martin Luther nailed his list of 95 grievances against the Catholic church to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. This is considered the beginning of the Reformation. Luther sought to reform the Catholic church and had no desire to break from it.
 - b. The great effect of the Reformation was in weakening the _____ and _____ of the Catholic church. The abuses and ignorance of the Catholic leaders were exposed on a wide scale, and the Word of God was increasingly viewed as possessing authority over tradition.
 - c. Luther produced a German translation of Erasmus's Greek N.T.



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THE ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES:

Thus far in our study we have learned how God preserved the O.T. Hebrew Scriptures up until the time of the printing press and the Reformation. Likewise, we've learned how God preserved the N.T. Greek Scriptures up to the same time. The thirst for knowledge being revived and students quenching that thirst in schools of higher learning, now there only wanted someone to apply that learning to the translation of the Bible from the original languages. In other words, it was necessary to have an accurate translation—God's Word—in English.

This would involve a process best described in God's Word itself—Psalm 12:6. Although no government had ever outlawed or restricted the transmission of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, it was unlawful to translate them into the common languages. Thus, at first, terrible opposition accompanied those men whom God called to the task.

“I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough, to know more of the Scripture than thou doest!” ~ William Tyndale

1. In the heart of land in England given up to the influence and control of Italy, William Tyndale was born around 1484 AD. Tyndale was brought up from his early years as a scholar at Oxford and then at Cambridge.
2. He became a private tutor in his home town in 1522 AD. Upon witnessing the corruption of the clergy and darkness of the common people, he began to understand the need for the Bible translated into English.
3. In 1523 AD he moved to London to find support for his determined purpose to translate the Bible into English. For one year he stayed with Humphrey Mummuth, but his preaching made him very unpopular with the priests. He realized that, to finish his work, he would have to leave England.
4. He moved to Hamburg, Germany and worked on translating the N.T. In 1525 after God had providentially protected his translation from being destroyed by an enemy, the first New Testament was printed at Worms and sent into England.
5. Before long the N.T. was condemned. Tyndale, never a coward in the face of adversity, carried on working for the truth.
6. In 1530 Tyndale began translating the O.T. He had also produced other writings and was in extreme danger. He was able to translate the Pentateuch and send it to print though not all at the same time. He also translated Jonah and sent it to print with a long prologue encouraging his countryman to the Scriptures.
7. In 1535 he was finally captured, and, while in prison awaiting execution, he translated Joshua through 2 Chronicles. On October 6, 1536 he was burned at the stake.



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TRANSLATION COMPLETED

In our last lesson we examined the life of William Tyndale and his effort to translate the Bible from the original languages into English. He was burned at the stake before being able to complete his mission. However, no king or queen would be able to stop the process he began. God's providence will continue to overrule kings and all in authority, Prov. 21:1.

COVERDALE BIBLE □ 1535

While spies were searching for William Tyndale and his life was in daily peril, another English Bible was being prepared. Thomas Cromwell, a very powerful man under the king at that time, sanctioned Myles Coverdale to prepare a new Bible, and he even paid for it!

- Although it is claimed in the title page that this Bible was translated from German and Latin Vulgate versions, Coverdale was competent in Hebrew and Greek.
- This Bible was a very insufficient translation. Coverdale relied heavily upon Tyndale's translation but his aim was to please his superiors, whereas, Tyndale's aim was to please God.
- Amazingly, this Bible was printed with the king's license just before and after Tyndale was burned at the stake.

MATTHEWS BIBLE □ 1537

With Coverdale's poor translation being licensed by the king and paid for by the powerful Cromwell, what was to become of Tyndale's superior translation? He had been hated by all the earthly powers, yet now we see heaven's regard for his labor.

- John Rogers, Tyndale's friend, completed Tyndale's Bible making up the parts of the O.T. that Tyndale had died before translating. Like Coverdale, he was a competent translator of Hebrew, yet it is uncertain whether he translated himself or used Coverdale's translation.
- The printer, Richard Grafton, applied to Thomas Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury to seek the king's license. Due to the plague, the enemies of the Scriptures were spread abroad, yet Cromwell had stayed in London. Cranmer sent the printer to him with a letter requesting the following license: "that the same may be sold and read of every person, without danger of any act, proclamation, or ordinance heretofore granted to the contrary"!
- Cromwell immediately took the Bible before the king and obtained the license! Thus, only a short time after Tyndale had been burned to ashes, the king of England granted a license that his Bible should be sold to and read by every person without any threat of danger!
- Therefore, Tyndale's Bible became the basis of all Bibles to follow and Coverdale's was set aside. Not one person of authority even knew of this translation before it was presented to Cranmer!



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TRANSLATION CHOSEN

Last week we saw how God providentially overruled a corrupt version of the Bible. Now we will learn the amazing story of how the true Word of God was preferred, copied, and given to English speaking peoples.

Great Bible – 1539

The demand for Bibles exceeding the supply, Grafton, the printer of the Matthews Bible, planned to print 2,500 more.

- Myles Coverdale was appointed to oversee the work and correct the press. Remember that it was his corrupt addition of the Bible that was first printed. At this time, his version is set aside forever.
- This printing was to be done in Paris. There are various possibilities as to why, such as, superior paper and printing abilities, or the size planned was too large to be printed in London.
 1. For years extreme opposition to translations prevailed in France. Likewise, the inquisition was raging there.
 2. King Henry the 8th of England actually petitioned King Francis the 1st of France for a license to print the Bibles in Paris! This is spectacular as both kings were at odds and practicing to deceive one another. God used their intrigues to the advantage of His Word!
 3. Although the license for printing was granted from one king to another, the danger was still very great. After over six months of comparative liberty to print, the command to halt came from both the French king and the inquisition! By God's providence, and as a precaution to the already immense danger, the finished portions had already been sent over to England!
 4. The sheets still in process of printing were seized and ordered to be burned. However, they were sold to a haberdasher and purchased back so that very little was lost!
 5. Persons commissioned by Cromwell returned to Paris and brought away the printing presses, types, and workmen from Paris to London! Comparatively little time was lost and the printing was completed in April of 1539 in London!
- The opposition and halting of the printing in Paris actually proved to be a tremendous blessing to England and another proof of God's providence.
- Yet another proof of God's providence was the absence of annotations that Coverdale had planned for the Bible
- The Great Bible was ordered to be put in every church by the clergy!



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TRANSLATION REFINED

Now that we have learned how God overruled kings and men in delivering to English speaking peoples His Word, we will see how His Word was refined.

In our last study we considered events happening in 1539. On the 28th of January, 1547, the horrible King Henry 8th passed away and his son, Edward the 6th ascended the throne. He was young and sickly and would not live a full seven years as king, but his kingdom was as the day is to night when compared with his father. All restrictions upon the Bible were lifted and many editions were printed.

After his death on the 6th of July, 1553, Mary would ascend the throne and turn the day into night once again. After a time, the fires were kindled all over England and many were martyred for their faith beginning with John Rogers who gave to the world the Matthews Bible. At this time, many fled England and once again the Bible will come from abroad.

Geneva Bible – 1560

The New Testament left the press on the 10th of June, 1557, and was soon thereafter introduced into England. To date, this was the best translation yet, having been “diligently revised by the most approved Greek examples, and conference of translations in other tongues.”

- William Whittingham was the man God chose for this important revision of the Bible. His was an improvement upon Tyndale's translation and an important preliminary step in the refining of the English Bible.
- This New Testament was the first to be divided into verses and printed in Roman type (like what's on this page).
- Upon completion of the N.T., Whittingham, Anthony Gilby, and Thomas Sampson began preparation for the larger undertaking of completing the whole Bible. They spent above two years or from January 1558 to the 10th of April, 1560. A patent was granted to John Bodeleigh by Queen Elizabeth for the printing of this Bible and it became the favorite English translation for many years to come.

Bishops Bible – 1568

Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, desired to produce a Bible superintended by the Bishops and to be used exclusively in churches. He hoped to overcome the popularity of the Geneva Bible, but he was unable to secure the support of Queen Elizabeth.

- Over fifteen Greek and Hebrew scholars were involved and it was an improvement upon Coverdale and Cranmer.
- Parker's wish was not fulfilled and his edition was consigned to history.



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TRANSLATION FINISHED

Thus far in our study we have traced our English Bible from the 1300's when the first translation was begun by Wycliffe. We've also considered the scholars used of God to translate the Bible from the original languages into English of whom Tyndale and Whittington were chief. And, we have seen how God providentially directed the translation work from single individuals to groups.

Now we will consider the single greatest Book in modern history, the King James Bible.

King James Bible – 1611

Although this masterpiece bears the name of James the 1st of England, the only historical credit that can be truly given must, like all we've seen before, be given only to our Almighty God.

- Shortly after ascending the throne of England and before he was lawfully king, James the 1st held a conference "...for the hearing, and for the determining, things pretended to be amiss in the Church" known to history as "the Conference at Hampton Court."
- During this three day conference in January of 1604, Dr. John Rainolds, an eminent scholar, proposed "that a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek..." The king approved.
- In June of that year a list of scholars was presented to the king for his acceptance. Although fifty-four men were chosen, the king instructed that anyone of learning should help by writing to the translators.
- The scholars were originally separated into five groups and three locals.
 - 1st group – Westminster and translating Genesis to 2 Kings. Some of the most eminent were: Dr. Lancelot Andrews who is reported to have known fifteen languages; Dr. Robert Tighe; and William Bedwell the best Arabic scholar of his time.
 - 2nd group – Cambridge and translating 1 Chronicles to Ecclesiastes. Edward Livlie was an eminent linguist in this group who died in 1605 reportedly slowing down the process. Dr. Laurence Chaderton was distinguished for Hebrews and Rabbinical learning. Thomas Harrison was eminently skilled in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Dr. Robert Spalding was a professor of Hebrew.
 - 3rd group – Oxford and translating Isaiah to Malachi. Dr. John Harding was a professor of Hebrew. Dr. John Rainolds (the man who proposed the translation to the king) of whom it was said that all Europe could not produce a superior. Dr. Thomas Holland described as "mighty in the Scriptures." Dr. Miles Smith was a Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic scholar and fluent in those languages. Dr. Richard Brett was an eminent linguist in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic, and Ethiopic.

4th group—Oxford and translating Matthew to Acts and Revelation. Sir Henry Savile was distinguished in the Greek language. Dr. John Peryn was a professor of Greek. Dr. Leonard Hutten was an excellent Greek scholar. Dr. John Harmar was a professor of Greek and a noted Latin and Greek scholar.

5th group—Westminster and translating Romans to Jude. William Dakins, B.D. Was a Greek Lecturer and skilled in original languages.

- Forty-seven men ended up dividing into six companies working separately in the three cities mentioned above and spent about four years translating the Bible. No money came from the king for assistance.
- Two men of each company were selected to review the work and took nine months to do so.
- Dr. Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, were the final examiners of the whole work.

It is no coincidence that the most popular Book in the English language is the King James Bible, and that it has been printed so many millions of times that certainly only God knows the number. This is God's Word for English speaking peoples!